

Homily
Friday after Ash Wednesday
February 24, 2023

I was very hungry on Ash Wednesday. I don't miss many meals, but I did my best to observe the prescribed fast as most of us are on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. And today, I miss my breakfast meats; sausage of every kind, corned beef hash, goetta, bacon. But I'm doing my best to observe the prescribed abstinence for Fridays during Lent. Why do we do this?

In today's Gospel, Jesus informs John's disciples that the wedding guests can't, "mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them," and, "The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast."

Why are we called to fast? Why are we called to abstain? Jesus is with us now, right? He's here in the Tabernacle. He will arrive at the words of consecration in a few moments. And He is here among us present in each and every one of us all the time.

These are disciplines the Church, in her great wisdom, has imposed on her faithful. Of course we celebrate the presence of Jesus. But we are only human. We need help to remember what we often forget or struggle to remember, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life." We need help to remember all that God has done for us. The Church has given us the liturgical seasons to help us, to guide us, to remember and rejoice.

"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens," (Ecclesiastes 3:1). This season of Lent is specific to preparation and penance. We are called to fast and abstain to help bring our bodies and minds under control. We recognize our failings. We mourn our sinfulness. This helps us prepare our hearts when we clear the way for those things that bring us closer to our Lord. This is why we start with ashes on our foreheads, watch what we eat throughout this season, pray and give alms, and prepare for the most terrible and most beautiful events in our liturgical calendar; the Passion, Death and Resurrection of our Lord and Savior.

It is important to celebrate all the seasons in life, especially in the life of our faith. Today, we lower our heads, remove certain obstacles, and focus on preparing ourselves. And in six short weeks, we mourn His death and the next evening we exult His resurrection. But first things first.